

THE SWANK WITH TWO KNECKS

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Summary

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Sergeant Paul Fairhurst recognised, through incident and crime logs, that the disorder outside the Swann pub in Chorley was increasing. But it was the newly installed town centre CCTV system that provided clear examples of widespread disorder.

The disorder was seen as a police problem. Chorley police officers on a Friday and Saturday night knew that at some stage they would be called to attend outside the Swann.

Analysis revealed that the Swann was the end of the night for most drinkers in Chorley. Since there were far too many people to get in the pub, they congregated outside. Drinkers did not need to go to the bar since they would acquire bottles and cans en route from off-licences. The licensee did not feel constrained to respond since most of the people causing trouble had not been his customers.

Local residents were fed up of the widespread disorder and noise made worse by the parking of a hot dog stand. The area was littered with broken glass the following morning where young people skateboarded and rode bicycles.

The land was in a conservation area and owned by the public house and the Council. The Police called meetings with the Council, the local vicar, the pub owners, the licensee and the Highways Authority. The CCTV footage was excellent leverage to make 'doing nothing' an untenable option.

Finally it was agreed that the area outside the pub should be defensively planted to restrict the area for crowds to gather. Yellow lines would move the hot dog stand and the pub would serve food. Local off-licences agreed not to sell drink in bottles on a Friday and Saturday after 8.00pm. An extra CCTV camera was funded. The Mounted Branch patrolled during and after building work so that the drunken revellers did not 'reclaim the ground'. The police, brewery and the Council all agreed to pay for the building work.

Plans to alter the road layout came to nothing and ideas to build railings around the church to prevent access were ruled out on the grounds of making the church less welcoming.

Incidents of disorder and arrests have fallen markedly. The CCTV operators have reported a considerable reduction in incidents and problems. The local residents initially complained of worse problems but now see an improvement. Local police officers have noticed a reduction in the demand for their services and generally feel very upbeat about the change.

Tilley Award 2001

Swann with Two Knecks

What are the objectives of the Project?

What was the project trying to achieve and what were the success criteria?

The Lancashire Constabulary's mission statement is to make the communities of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured. The disorder and violence centred on the Swann with Two Knecks public house in Chorley were a threat to achieving those goals. The project set out to reduce the incidence of crime and disorder in and around the Swann, particularly at weekends.

The drinking and socialising habits of drinkers and revellers in Chorley had to change so that the huge crowds of people outside the Swann would not gather. It was these crowds that sparked the disorder and prevented normal police attendance from having any real impact.

There had to be less disorder, fewer calls to police, and fewer injured police officers attending large-scale disturbances. The police themselves needed to feel safer. Another aim was the removal of the need for extra constables on the beat at the end of licensing hours on Friday and Saturday.

The residents in the area needed to feel safer, with less disturbance, damage and nuisance.

There had to be an improvement in the amenity of the area at other times. An elimination of broken glass so that children could use the slope for recreation, or as a safe thoroughfare.

Less damage and litter for the Churchwarden to remove prior to church services on Sunday mornings.

A more even distribution of drinkers throughout Chorley would allow the end of licensing hours to be policed more effectively and still allow a vibrant licensing trade, a significant part of the local business scene. Chorley itself is sandwiched between Preston and Bolton, both larger towns with tempting nightlife.

One further success criterion was the improvement in the image of the Swann by law enforcement agencies, be it the police, fire brigade, magistrates or local authority licensing committee. This could be measured by the granting of extensions to licensing hours for the pub. Earlier requests had been rejected because of the disturbances on Friday and Saturday nights.

How was the problem identified?

The development of an extensive town centre CCTV system in Chorley allowed local authority monitors to record on camera the large crowds and disturbances outside the Swann. Furthermore they were able to witness the events which preceded the emergency call to the police which prompted our attendance. The police were never before privy to what caused the problem. The analysis of the tapes was later to provide good source material for the analysis, as well as compelling evidence to apply leverage to reluctant partners.

Letters published in the local newspaper, letters to the Magistrates, Police and Council, all clearly showed that local people were dissatisfied. Their confidence, in the agencies they considered responsible and capable of solving the problem, was obviously deteriorating.

Police data stored in incident logs and crime records showed that the Swann was a hot spot on a Friday and Saturday night. Albeit the CCTV footage showed that there were many collisions between pedestrians and cars, these were usually when crowds spilling onto the road had brought cars to a halt; the collision statistics did not highlight this problem. The collisions were apparently going unreported.

Why was this problem prioritised over others?

The disorder was of such a scale when it occurred that police officers made sure several patrols attended. They were dealing with two hundred or so people. The divisional support unit were block booked to work on Friday and Saturday in Chorley, to the detriment of other divisional priorities, in the division's other major towns and rural communities.

One special constable was seriously injured with a bottle. Young people suffered many similar injuries and allegations of sexual offences and obscene acts were common place.

The evidence was showing that the problems were not going to go away with the traditional police responses. When licensed premises become a major drain on police resources and threat to public tranquillity then the police use the licensing laws to either restrict the way the pub is managed or to close it down. These options were severely limited in this case because the boundaries of the pub were unclear, and the vast majority of the people causing the trouble were not clients of the Swann but had congregated there with their own drink (usually bought from off licences).

Response by police officers to disturbances would never solve the underlying cause of the problem. Indeed it was apparent from the CCTV footage that the crowd enjoyed the attendance of the police. It had become part of the entertainment. Ironically the police response was further embedding the conditions for the problem to thrive.

Who was involved in identifying the problem?

The circumstances surrounding the disorder at the Swann was obvious to the public and police alike for many years. They however had not identified it as a problem but as a misfortune, as something that was going to happen and could not be solved. The prime mover in the identification of the disorder as a problem (and therefore something which was amenable to possible solutions) was Sergeant Fairhurst of the crime prevention department (now multi-agency problem solving team).

Sergeant Fairhurst's awareness of the problem had been focused by his evaluation of the effects of the introduction of CCTV into Chorley town centre in Dec 1996. The CCTV operators had quickly become the experts in disorder in Chorley. They were the first people to study continuously and dispassionately the build up and deplorable outcomes of the gathering of large crowds outside the Swann.

The Magistrates Licensing Bench had made representations to the police to enforce the licensing laws to reduce the level of disorder and glass left on the streets after a night's drinking and revelry.

The Local Authority had been criticised for the levels of litter and broken glass in and around the public house, which is in a conservation area.

The Church had debated the levels of litter and human waste in their doorways. They recognised that the situation needed to be improved but did not want to make the Church appear like a fortress.

How did you define the problem?

What information and information sources did you use and how did you go about analysing the problem?

Sergeant Fairhurst monitored incident and crime reports for references to the Swann. Whenever the police had attended he watched the CCTV footage with the monitoring staff. Themes were noted.

Sergeant Fairhurst also spoke to the young people who went to the Swann, to find out why they went, and what might alter their drinking and socialising behaviour.

Sergeant Fairhurst also spoke to the licensee and police officers in Chorley to see whether they had any ideas.

Sergeant Fairhurst was already familiar with the concepts of designing out crime, being qualified as an Architectural Liaison Officer.

All parties consulted were shown the CCTV footage to show exactly what was occurring.

What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?

The underlying cause of the problem was undoubtedly the huge numbers of drinkers both in and outside the Swann. Who were all compressed into a very limited open space. Trouble was invariably flared through people bumping into each other, or trying to occupy the same space.

The young people interviewed explained how the piazza area outside the Swann was safe from traffic. It was well lit and the high walls protected the area from the worst weather. The Swann was situated at the end of Market Street, which allowed drinking to be a pub-crawl from the south end of the town centre to the north. It was useful for everyone to meet up at the end of the night to move on elsewhere or arrange future events.

There were obvious pinch points where the crowd had to squeeze through narrow gaps:

- the top of the slope leading down to the Swann
- * the pavement between the slope and the church where many people were pushed into the road
- the paths to the front of the Swann restricted by raised flower beds
- the area near a van used by a hot dog street vendor

The licensee was quite happy to allow the large crowds, because although not all could get into his pub, most tried and his premises were always full to capacity. He feared that any restriction in the crowds outside would only reduce the popularity of the pub.

The area was difficult for the police to intervene if there was any trouble. If the police did drive past then the CCTV footage clearly show bottles and glasses being lobbed towards the police like mortars. The person throwing was virtually impossible to spot, even with the aid of state of the art CCTV cameras.

The cameras showed that people were having a fun time. The young people interviewed confirmed this.

The repeat arrests of known violent offenders showed that if you were so minded you could always get a fight there - with the added bonus of an appreciative audience.

The Swann was at the end of town nearest the bus station. As the crowds dispersed there were many dark corners for the benefit of courting couples. Additionally it is over the road from the only nightclub in Chorley.

What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?

This problem was not the result of acts by a small violent minority. The whole drinking culture of Chorley had changed over a number of years to end the weekend drinking outside the Swann. There was the added bonus that people could buy drink at much cheaper prices in off licences. Branded lagers and 'alcopops' could be drunk from bottles.

The hard core of violent offenders would have to be deterred from going to the Swann, or to refrain from violence. Furthermore, the law abiding would have to be deterred from congregating outside the Swann, because it was the massed hordes, which prevented the police dealing with criminality.

The main problem was that the violence and trouble could not be attributed to the management of the pub and so the traditional application and leverage of the licensing laws was not available. Any design work was problematic since the ownership of the land outside the Swann was in dispute. Plans did not make clear where the pub's boundary ended and the highway started. The land was also part of a conservation area.

Who was involved in analysing the problem?

Sergeant Fairhurst had been a lone voice suggesting that the problem could be designed out. He sought the support of the Detective Inspector and Detective Chief Inspector, and a meeting was convened with all the affected parties: Borough Council Development Department, the management of the CCTV operators, County Council Highways Department, Licensee, Vicar and Punch Taverns the owners of the Swann.

Sergeant Fairhurst had already done a great deal of analysis through studying the video footage with the operators and speaking to the young people themselves. He introduced the problem by showing a compilation of violent episodes outside the Swann. He then led the meeting through his analysis of the problem and potential responses.

The Borough Council Development Department and County Council Highways Department had considerable expertise in what would be effective and legal. Punch Taverns and the licensee were also useful in describing behaviour exhibited by customers.

What gaps of information were there and how did you deal with this?

The partnership did not solicit views from other agencies (other than off-licences) within Chorley, since the considered opinion was that the partnership would become too cumbersome and unwieldy. The partnership as already convened was finding difficulty at times to make decisions that everyone felt able to sign up to. The lack of first hand opinion from other licensees was allowable since their customers had been consulted and it was their view of the world that was important to analysing the problems outside the Swann.

How did you deal with the problem?

The principle response was to re-design the frontage of the Swann to clearly define the limits of the public and allow door staff to regulate entry and exit. The design would also significantly encroach upon the piazza area with raised beds and defensive planting to restrict the numbers of people capable of congregating and socialising in a convivial atmosphere. The hot dog stand, which was a further encouragement for people to congregate, was moved through the imposition of yellow lines. The behaviour of the crowd could be monitored more closely through the erection of an additional camera on the town centre CCTV system. The planned design at the top of the slope on the main road itself proved to be problematic. The pavement could not be railed because it was too narrow. The top of the slope could however have a chicane built to slow down the egress of customers onto the main road.

The church were part of the partnership throughout but made it clear that any development work to the outside of the church would need the approval of the diocese of Blackburn as well as the Parochial Church Council and this would be a lengthy and expensive process. The Vicar was clear that the church must remain welcoming and a design of railings, which were low in height but restricted people sitting on the wall, was put forward as a potential solution should it be needed. (In the event the work outside the Swann was so successful that the Parochial Church Council did not feel the need to progress this initiative).

The DI entered into an agreement with the off-licences, which had been selling bottled lager, to refrain from selling such items at 9.00pm on a Friday and Saturday night.

Why did you choose your response over others?

Most other tactics, in particular traditional police responses, had failed. The Chorley town centre did not ordinarily justify significant numbers of police officers and so a capable guardian had to be found that did not involve drawing on depleted police resources.

The response selected was one that all partners felt able to sign up to.

How did your analysis contribute to the design of the response?

The analysis indicated that the ground, i.e. the piazza, had to be taken. The ground needed to be taken in a long-term way since a short-term project would only allow people to return. The CCTV footage was able to show crowd dynamics and where the pinch-points were, which highlighted the need for a chicane at the top of the slope.

The analysis with the licensee and owners of the pub showed that they had no ownership of the piazza area and furthermore had no ownership of anything that happened outside the pub — even on their land — since it was impossible to say who was a customer and who wasn't. The definition of their boundary and agreement for it to be staffed by them was vital to the design. Questioning the young people themselves showed they wanted to eat at the end of the night and the removal of the fast food van was key. A previous licensee of the Swann had built a picnic area at the far side of the piazza on land the pub owned. It was separated by the right of way and had become overgrown under the tenantry of the current licensee. Analysis of the CCTV showed that the crowds did not use this area since it had been overgrown with briars. The licensee agreed not to develop this area since analysis showed that clearing it for it to be used by customers would only exacerbate the problem.

What evidence did you have that this was an effective intervention?

The CCTV monitoring showed an immediate impact. There were far fewer people there and only minor skirmishes, (which can be associated with any licensed premises) taking place infrequently. Consequently there were few arrests and significantly fewer calls for police attendance.

How did you gain ownership of the response, within and outside the force?

The meetings chaired by the DCI were vital to apply leverage to reluctant and disparate partners. When the Council was proving reluctant to co-operate in the response (through budgetary considerations), key politicians were approached to provide their support to progress. The DCI gave evidence to the local authority licensing committee and secured their backing for the proposed response through gaining their veto to any consideration of extension of licensing hours until the work had been successfully completed. This was the way that the pub's licensee and owners were kept on side throughout. The impactful compilation of CCTV footage by Sergeant Fairhurst was generally all that needed to be shown to waiverers, since it pointed out in stark terms the danger of doing nothing. The local beat officer was able to retain the confidence of residents in the area through keeping them briefed throughout. Keeping the residents away from the partnership meetings also allowed the response to be controlled, since it allowed people to focus on the positive and not be side-lined by negatives of disorder which the partnership was already aware of.

How did you plan and implement your response: what factors influenced this?

All the responses were agreed and minuted at the partnership meetings. All remedial work was timetabled with deadlines. Deadlines were insisted upon so that if not met leverage could be brought to bear on politicians or leaders, since some partners were not reluctant to support this -- they just had competing work and the leverage applied was to ensure that the Swann's work was prioritised above others. Chorley Borough Council was the lead agency throughout, since it had influence in so many fields — regeneration, planning, CCTV monitoring, street vendors, licensing, residents' influence on local Councillors, part of the community safety partnership (then in its infancy), and the owners of part of the land itself. The police retained control of day to day policing and ensured that short-term significant increases in policing were applied at

the relevant times of development, for example when most of the construction was taking place and in its immediate aftermath. The licensee was given responsibility to employ door staff and have responsibility for land within the curtilage of the public house, since that was his job.

Did you have a costed plan, and resources available to support the response?

This was a sticking point because the pub and council were not sure where the boundary was drawn. Furthermore the owners of the Swami felt that since the people causing the trouble outside were not their clients they should not be responsible for paying for the work. Even if they were liable, they insisted on contributions from the whole of the licensees in Chorley, since they gain from the work. Indeed, the off licences were a direct cause of the broken glass since they sold the bottled beer to be drunk outside.

The police recognised this impasse and it was decided to offer cash from the police to act as a moral lever on the other parties to fund the landscaping. The work was originally priced at over £30k, but a request by all the partners to look for savings produced a more detailed costing of £18,750.

At a tense meeting when this figure was debated Punch Taverns would not accept the cost. The Borough Council felt they had done enough, in providing the architect and all the detailed plans as well as allowing the pub to take ownership of the land encompassed by the hard landscaping. The DCI then offered to pay over £4k cash together with the short and medium increased policing costs to deter punters from congregating during and immediately after construction work. He suggested shares of 4 for the police, 5 for the Council and 6 for the pub owners. Agreement followed immediately. The police may have embarked on an unusual course but the management team had already agreed to provide funds since the overtime bill alone covered the £4k, without calculating the savings from projected falls in disorder, and serious assaults.

The work to restrict parking to deter the hot dog stand was offered by the County Highways Department, within their budget.

The extra policing was covered by support from Headquarters Mounted Branch at no additional cost to the division.

What difficulties did you encounter and how did you respond to these?

The wrangling over cash and who should do the support work threatened several times to derail the project. Additionally the Highways Department were reluctant to do anything other than painting yellow lines. They found rules to prevent the pavement at the top of the slope being separated from the road with railings - the pavement was too narrow.

At each meeting where the negative voices were heard they were reminded of the effects of inaction through the playing of the most impactful five minutes of video

footage showing very violent episodes. The police viewpoint remained steadfast, any inaction that led to serious assaults or worse would be blood on the hands of the people who could see the solution but failed to act. There was no doubt that the other agencies felt pressurised at times.

At one meeting the police invited two local residents to attend the meetings. This was to add to the moral pressure to do something. In the event that meeting produced little progress since some key players did not attend. It was at the next meeting when the two residents could not attend that the partners agreed to the financial plan.

What ongoing review mechanisms were put in place and what changes came about as a result of this process?

The Borough Council Development Department managed the project. They had done all the preliminary work and were the responsible authority to deal with the conservation area.

The project plans were changed several times during construction. The first glitch was the lack of Health & Safety clearance for the original winning bid for construction. This meant that the work planned to commence in May - prior to the summer peak of disorder - had to be postponed until September. Since construction during the peak months of summer was recognised as impossible to police the construction site with ready made missiles in the shape of bricks.

The delay served to confirm the need for the design since all the partners were able to see at first hand during the summer of 2000 the lack of impact on the problem by traditional policing methods. They had the added benefit of looking at these results armed with the analysis of the problem.

Prior to construction beginning it was discovered that whilst the piazza area had become common land over the previous nine years it did in fact encroach on to a public right of way. This had implications both legally and practically with the elected contractor. So the partners had to agree a smaller area covered by the raised beds, in effect the apex of the triangle was lopped off. The concern was that this would still leave a discernible piazza, as opposed to the proposed plan which would have appeared as two paths separated by the raised beds.

It was decided that the effect of this could only be minimised by policing. In the weeks immediately following construction the police parked a police van next to the piazza with mounted officers taking the ground at the start of the evening. There is no doubt this had an impact on the punters. They actually asked why the work had been done. All the police officers were briefed to inform them of the plan, and that previous patterns of behaviour would no longer be tolerated.

At the same time the pub was responsible for employing door staff on the threshold of the pub land - now clearly marked as a raised step between two retaining walls. This was rigidly enforced; no Swann customers were allowed to leave the premises with glasses or drinks. The police ensued that people did not loiter on the remaining piece

of piazza, since it was now a narrower thoroughfare and therefore people had to move to allow others free passage.

Of course the hot dog stand was no longer a draw as a result of the yellow lines which forced it to move into the town centre.

How successful was your approach?

Did the response achieve what was intended, and if so, how do you know?

The approach was successful in that the numbers of people outside the Swann reduced dramatically. The number of incidents of crime and disorder fell dramatically over a sustained period (and it continues).

Qualitatively the project was able to prove that the licensee was not as professional as he maintained. This was a suspicion of the partnership but one that could not be proved since the licensee could always hide behind unclear boundaries to his property. Once the premises had to be more effectively managed, the number of customers fell dramatically, since they were not attending the Swann for ambience, it was for the thrill of being part of a crowd which regularly engaged in disorder. The licensee left the pub shortly after the work was completed. There has yet to be an application for extending licensing hours.

There is much less broken glass, measured by observation and no complaints from members of the public.

The drinking habits of revellers in Chorley have not changed markedly, but for the smaller crowds outside the Swann.

What methods of evaluation did you choose and why?

The main method of evaluation was monitoring of the CCTV tapes because that was the benchmark of the original problem and therefore had provided consistency of evaluation without resorting to indicators, which could have been attributed to other factors.

These tapes prove that the response has had a significant impact on disorder outside the Swann. Albeit there are fights and problems there have not been any cases where the weight of numbers have prevented the police from making a timely and effective intervention.

What data did you use, what did you discard and why?

CCTV operator logs, which clearly identify the nature and prevalence of disorder in the area as well as the police response, these can of course be validated by viewing the stored images.

No data was discarded since the evaluation was clear from the start that it would be assessed on disorder and crime levels.